

EVELYN WAUGH'S

DECLINE AND FALL

PART III

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CHAPTER I

Stone Walls do not a Prison Make

PAUL'S trial, which took place some weeks later at the Old Bailey, was a bitter disappointment to the public, the news editors and the jury and counsel concerned. The arrest at the Ritz, the announcement at St Margaret's that the wedding was postponed, Margot's flight to Corfu, the refusal of bail, the meals sent in to Paul on covered dishes from Boulestin's, had been "front-page stories" every day. After all this, Paul's conviction and sentence were a lame conclusion. At first he pleaded guilty on all charges, despite the entreaties of his counsel, but eventually he was galvanized into some show of defence by the warning of the presiding judge that the law allowed punishment with the cat-o'-nme-tails for offences of this sort. Even then things were very flat, Potts as chief witness for the prosecution was unshakable and was later warmly commended by the court, no evidence, except of previous good conduct, was offered by the defence, Margot Beste-Chetwynde's name was not mentioned, though the judge in passing sentence remarked that "no one could be ignorant of the callous insolence with which, on the very eve of arrest for this most infamous of crimes, the accused had been preparing to join his name with one honoured in his country's history, and to drag down to his own pitiable depths of depravity a lady of beauty, rank and stainless reputation. The just censure of society," remarked the judge, "is accorded to those so inconstant and intemperate that they must take their pleasures in the unholy market of humanity that still sullies the fame of our civilization, but for the traders themselves, these human vampires who prey upon the

degradation of their species, society has reserved the right of ruthless suppression." So Paul was sent off to prison, and the papers headed the column they reserve for home events of minor importance with "Prison for Ex-Society Bridegroom, Judge on Human Vampires," and there, as far as the public were concerned, the matter ended.

Before this happened, however, a conversation took place which deserves the attention of all interested in the confused series of events of which Paul had become a part. One day, while he was waiting for trial, he was visited in his cell by Peter Beste-Chetwynde.

"Hullo!" he said.

"Hullo, Paul," said Peter. "Mamma asked me to come in to see you. She wants to know if you are getting the food all right she's ordered for you I hope you like it, because I chose most of it myself. I thought you wouldn't want anything very heavy."

"It's splendid," said Paul. "How's Margot?"

"Well, that's rather what I've come to tell you, Paul Margot's gone away."

"Where to'?"

"She's gone off alone to Corfu. I made her, though she wanted to stay and see your trial. You can imagine what a time we've had with reporters and people. You don't think it awful of her, do you? And listen, there's something else. Can that policeman hear? It's this. You remember that awful old man Maltravers? Well, you've probably seen, he's Home Secretary now. He's been round to Mamma in the most impossible Oppenheim kind of way, and said that if she'd marry him he could get you out. Of course, he's obviously been reading books. But Mamma thinks it's probably true, and she wants to know how you feel about it. She rather feels the whole thing's rather her fault, really, and, short of going to prison herself, she'll do anything to help. You can't imagine Mamma in prison, can you ! ? Well, would you rather get out now and her marry Maltravers, or wait until you do get out and marry her yourself? She was rather definite about it."

Paul thought of Professor Silenus's, "In ten years she will be worn out," but he said, "I'd rather she waited if you think she possibly can."

"I thought you'd say that, Paul. I'm so glad Mamma said 'I won't say I don't know how I shall ever be able to make up to him for all this, because I think he knows I can.' Those were her words. I don't suppose you will get more than a year or so, will you ?"

"Good Lord, I hope not," said Paul.

His sentence of seven years' penal servitude was rather a blow. "In ten years she will be worn out," he thought as he drove in the prison van to Blackstone Gaol.

On his first day there Paul met quite a number of people, some of whom he knew already. The first person was a warder with a low brow and distinctly menacing manner. He wrote Paul's name in the "Body Receipt Book" with some difficulty and then conducted him to a cell. He had evidently been reading the papers.

"Rather different from the Ritz Hotel, eh ?" he said.
"We don't like your kind 'ere, see ? And we knows 'ow to treat 'em. You won't find nothing like the Ritz 'ere, you dirty White Slaver."

But there he was wrong, because the next person Paul met was Philbrick. His prison clothes were ill-fitting, and his chin was unshaven, but he still wore an indefinable air of the grand manner.

"Thought I'd be seeing you soon," he said "They've put me on to reception hall cleaner, me being an old hand. I've been saving the best suit I could find for you. Not a louse on it, hardly." He threw a little pile of clothes, stamped with the broad arrow, on to the bench.

The warder returned with another, apparently his superior officer. Together they made a careful inventory of all Paul's possessions.

"Shoes, brown, one pair, socks, fancy, one pair, suspenders, black silk, one pair," read out the warder in a sing-song voice. "Never saw a bloke with so much clothes."

There were several checks due to difficulties of spelling, and it was some time before the list was finished.

"Cigarette case, white metal, containing two cigarettes, watch, white metal, tie-pin, fancy," -- it had cost Margot

considerably more than the warder earned in a year, had he only known -- "studs, bone, one pair, cuff links, fancy, one pair." The officers looked doubtfully at Paul's gold cigar piercer, the gift of the best man "What's this ere'?"

"It's for cigars," said Paul.

"Not so much lip," said the warder, banging him on the top of his head with the pair of shoes he happened to be holding. "Put it down as 'instrument ' That's the lot," he said, "unless you've got false teeth. You're allowed to keep them, only we must make a note of it."

"No," said Paul.

"Truss or other surgical appliance?"

"No," said Paul

"All right! You can go to the bath."

Paul sat for the regulation ten minutes in the regulation nine inches of warm water -- which smelt reassuringly of disinfectant -- and then put on his prison clothes. The loss of his personal possessions gave him a curiously agreeable sense of irresponsibility.

"You look a treat," said Philbrick.

Next he saw the Medical Officer, who sat at a table covered with official forms.

"Name ?" said the Doctor.

"Pennyfeather."

"Have you at any time been detained in a mental home or similar institution ? If so, give particulars."

"I was at Scone College, Oxford, for two years," said Paul.

The Doctor looked up for the first time. "Don't you dare to make jokes here, my man," he said, "or I'll soon have you in the strait-jacket in less than no time!"

"Sorry," said Paul.

"Don't speak to the Medical Officer unless to answer a question," said the warder at his elbow.

"Sorry," said Paul, unconsciously, and was banged on the head.

"Suffering from consumption or any contagious disease?" asked the Doctor.

"Not that I know of," said Paul.

"That's all," said the Doctor. "I have certified you as capable of undergoing the usual descriptions of punishment as specified below, to wit, restraint of handcuffs, leg-chains, cross-irons, body-belt, canvas dress, close confinement, No 1 diet, No 2 diet, birch-rod and cat-o'-mne-tails. Any complaint?"

"But must I have all these at once?" asked Paul, rather dismayed.

"You will if you ask impertinent questions. Look after that man, officer, he's obviously a troublesome character."

"Come 'ere, you," said the warder. They went up a passage and down two flights of iron steps. Long galleries with iron railings stretched out in each direction, giving access to innumerable doors. Wire-netting was stretched between the landings. "So don't you try no monkey-tacks. Suicide isn't allowed in this prison. See?" said the warder. "This is your cell. Keep it clean, or you'll know the reason why, and this is your number." He buttoned a yellow badge on to Paul's coat.

"Like a flag-day," said Paul.

"Shut up, you," remarked the warder, and locked the door.

"I suppose I shall learn to respect these people in time," thought Paul. "They all seem so much less awe-inspiring than anyone I ever met."

His next visit was from the Schoolmaster. The door was unlocked, and a seedy-looking young man in a tweed suit came into the cell.

"Can you read and write, D 4 12?" asked the newcomer.

"Yes," said Paul.

"Public or secondary education?"

"Public," said Paul. His school had been rather sensitive on this subject.

"What was your standard when you left school?"

"Well, I don't quite know. I don't think we had standards."

The Schoolmaster marked him down as "Memory defective" on a form and went out. Presently he returned with a book.

"You must do your best with that for the next four weeks," he said. "I'll try and get you into one of the morning classes. You won't find it difficult, if you can read fairly easily. You see, it begins there," he said helpfully, showing Paul the first page.

It was an English Grammar published in 1872.

"A syllable is a single sound made by one simple effort of the voice," Paul read. "Thank you," he said; "I'm sure I shall find it useful."

"You can change it after four weeks if you can't get on with it," said the Schoolmaster. "But I should stick to it, if you can."

Again the door was locked.

Next came the Chaplain. "Here is your Bible and a book of devotion. The Bible stays in the cell always. You can change the book of devotion any week if you wish to. Are you Church of England? Services are voluntary-- that is to say, you must either attend all or none." The Chaplain spoke in a nervous and hurried manner. He was new to his job, and he had already visited fifty prisoners that day, one of whom had delayed him for a long time with descriptions of a vision he had seen the night before.

"Hullo, Prendy ?" said Paul.

Mr Prendergast looked at him anxiously. "I didn't recognize you," he said "People look so much alike in those clothes. This is most disturbing, Pennyfeather. As soon as I saw that you'd been convicted I was afraid they might send you here. Oh dear! oh dear! It makes

everything still more difficult."

"What's the matter, Prendy ? Doubts again ?"

"No, no, discipline, my old trouble. I've only been at the job a week. I was very lucky to get it. My bishop said he thought there was more opening for a Modern Churchman in this kind of work than in the parishes. The Governor is very modern too. But criminals are just as bad as boys, I find. They pretend to make confessions and tell me the most dreadful things just to see what I'll say, and in chapel they laugh so much that the warders spend all their time correcting them. It makes the services seem so irreverent. Several of them got put on No 1 diet this morning for singing the wrong words to one of the hymns, and of course that only makes me more unpopular. Please, Pennyfeather, if you don't mind, you mustn't call me Prendy, and if anyone passes the cell will you stand up when you're talking to me? You're supposed to, you see, and the Chief Warder has said some very severe things to me about maintaining discipline."

At this moment the face of the warder appeared at the peephole in the door.

"I trust you realize the enormity of your offence and the justice of your punishment?" said Mr Prendergast in a loud voice. "Pray for penitence."

A warder came into the cell.

"Sorry to disturb you, sir, but I've got to take this one to see the Governor. There's D-4-18 down the way been asking for you for days. I said I'd tell you, only, if you'll forgive my saying so, I shouldn't be too soft with 'im, sir. We know 'im of old. 'E's a sly old devil, begging your pardon, sir, and 'e's only religious when 'e thinks it'll pay."

"I think that I am the person to decide that, officer," said Mr Prendergast with some dignity. "You may take D-4-12 to the Governor."

Sir Wilfred Lucas-Dockery had not been intended by nature or education for the Governor of a prison, his appointment was the idea of a Labour Home Secretary who had been impressed by an appendix on the theory of penology which he had contributed to a report on the treatment of "Conscientious Objectors". Up to that time Sir Wilfred had held the Chair of Sociology at a Midland

university, only his intimate friends and a few specially favoured pupils knew that behind his mild and professional exterior he concealed an ardent ambition to serve in the public life of his generation. He stood twice for Parliament, but so diffidently that his candidature passed almost unnoticed. Colonel MacAdder, his predecessor in office, a veteran of numberless unrecorded campaigns on the Afghan frontier, had said to him on his retirement, "Good luck, Sir Wilfred! If I may give you a piece of advice, it's this: Don't bother about the lower warders or the prisoners. Give hell to the man immediately below you, and you can rely on him to pass it on with interest. If you make a prison bad enough, people'll take jolly good care to keep out of it. That's been my policy all through, and I'm proud of it." (a policy which soon became quite famous in the society of Cheltenham Spa.)

Sir Wilfred, however, had his own ideas. "You must understand," he said to Paul, "that it is my aim to establish personal contact with each of the men under my care. I want you to take a pride in your prison and in your work here. So far as possible, I like the prisoners to carry on with their avocations in civilized life. What was this man's profession, officer?"

"White Slave traffic, sir."

"Ah yes. Well, I'm afraid you won't have much opportunity for that here. What else have you done?"

"I was nearly a clergyman once," said Paul.

"Indeed? Well, I hope in time, if I find enough men with the same intention, to get together a theological class. You've no doubt met the Chaplain, a very broadminded man. Still for the present we are only at the beginning. The Government regulations are rather uncompromising. For the first four weeks you will have to observe the solitary confinement ordained by law. After that we will find you something more creative. We don't want you to feel that your personality is being stamped out. Have you any experience of art leather work?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I might put you into the Arts and Crafts Workshop. I came to the conclusion many years ago that almost all crime is due to the repressed desire for aesthetic expression. At last we have the opportunity for testing it.

Are you an extravert or an introvert?"

"I'm afraid I'm not sure, sir."

"So few people are. I'm trying to induce the Home Office to instal an official psycho-analyst. Do you read the New Nation, I wonder? There is rather a flattering article this week about our prison called The Lucas-Dockery Experiments. I like the prisoners to know these things. It gives them corporate pride. I may give you one small example of the work we are doing that affects your own case. Up till now all offences connected with prostitution have been put into the sexual category. Now I hold that an offence of your kind is essentially acquisitive and shall grade it accordingly. It does not, of course, make any difference as far as your conditions of imprisonment are concerned -- the routine of penal servitude is prescribed by Standing Orders -- but you see what a difference it makes to the annual statistics."

"The human touch," said Sir Wilfred after Paul had been led from the room, "I'm sure it makes all the difference. You could see with that unfortunate man just now what a difference it made to him to think that, far from being a mere nameless slave, he has now become part of a great revolution in statistics."

"Yes, sir," said the Chief Warder, "and, by the way, there are two more attempted suicides being brought up to-morrow. You must really be more strict with them, sir. Those sharp tools you've issued to the Arts and Crafts School is just putting temptation in the men's way."

Paul was once more locked in, and for the first time had the opportunity of examining his cell. There was little to interest him. Besides his Bible, his book of devotion -- Prayers on Various Occasions of Illness, Uncertainty and Loss, by the Rev Septimus Bead, in Edinburgh, 1863 -- and his English Grammar, there was a little glazed pint pot, a knife and spoon, a slate and slate-pencil, a salt-jar, a metal water-can, two earthenware vessels, some cleaning materials, a plank bed upright against the wall, a roll of bedding, a stool and a table. A printed notice informed him that he was not to look out of the window. Three printed cards on the wall contained a list of other punishable offences, which seemed to include every human activity, some Church of England prayers, and an explanation of the "system of progressive stages". There was also a typewritten

"Thought for the Day," one of Sir Wilfred Lucas-Dockery's little innovations. The message for the first day of Paul's imprisonment was "SENSE OF SIN IS SENSE OF WASTE," the Editor of the Sunday Express, " Paul studied the system of progressive stages with interest. After four weeks, he read, he would be allowed to join in associated labour, to take half an hour's exercise on Sundays, to wear a stripe on his arm, if illiterate to have school instruction, to take one work of fiction from the library weekly, and, if special application were made to the Governor, to exhibit four photographs of his relatives or of approved friends, after eight weeks, provided that his conduct was perfectly satisfactory, he might receive a visit of twenty minutes' duration and write and receive a letter. Six weeks later he might receive another visit and another letter and another library book weekly.

Would Davy Lennox's picture of the back of Margot's head be accepted as the photograph of an approved friend, he wondered?

After a time his door was unlocked again and opened a few inches. A hand thrust in a tin, and a voice said, "Pint pot quick!" Paul's mug was filled with cocoa, and the door was again locked. The fan contained bread, bacon and beans. That was the last interruption for fourteen hours. Paul fell into a reverie. It was the first time he had been really alone for months. How very refreshing it was, he reflected.

The next four weeks of solitary confinement were among the happiest of Paul's life. The physical comforts were certainly meagre, but at the Ritz Paul had learned to appreciate the inadequacy of purely physical comfort. It was so exhilarating, he found, never to have to make any decision on any subject, to be wholly relieved from the smallest consideration of time, meals or clothes, to have no anxiety ever about what kind of impression he was making, in fact, to be free. At some rather chilly time in the early morning a bell would ring, and the warder would say, "Slops outside," he would rise, roll up his bedding and dress, there was no need to shave, no hesitation about what tie he should wear, none of the fidgeting with studs and collars and links that so distracts the waking moments of civilized man. He felt like the happy people in the advertisements for shaving soap who seem to have achieved very simply that peace of mind so distant and so desirable in the early morning. For about an hour he stitched away at a mail-bag, until his door was again unlocked to admit a hand with a lump of bread

and a large ladle of porridge. After breakfast he gave a cursory polish to the furniture and crockery of his cell and did some more sewing until the bell rang for chapel. For a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, he heard Mr Prendergast blaspheming against the beauties of sixteenth-century diction. This was certainly a bore, and so was the next hour during which he had to march round the prison square, where between concentric paths of worn asphalt a few melancholy cabbages showed their heads. Some of the men during this period used to fall out under the pretence of tying a shoe-lace and take furtive bites at the leaves of the vegetables. If observed they were severely punished. Paul never felt any temptation to do this. After that the day was unbroken save for luncheon, supper, and the Governor's inspection. The heap of sacking which every day he was to turn into mail-bags was supposed by law to keep him busy for time hours. The prisoners in the cells on either side of him, who were not quite in their right mmds, the warder told Paul, found some difficulty in finishing their task before lights out. Paul found that with the least exertion he had finished long before supper, and spent the evenings in meditation and in writing up on his slate the thoughts which had occurred to him during the day.

CHAPTER II

The Lucas-Dockery Experiments

SIR WILFRED LUCAS-DOCKERY, as has already been suggested, combined ambition, scholarship and genuine optimism in a degree rarely found in his office. He looked forward to a time when the Lucas-Dockery experiments should be recognized as the beginning of a new epoch in penology, and he rehearsed in his mind sentences from the social histories of the future which would contain such verdicts as "One of the few important events of this Labour Government's brief tenure of power was the appointment as Governor of Blackstone Gaol of Sir Wilfred Lucas- Dockery. The administration of this intrepid and far-seeing official is justly regarded as the foundation of the present system of criminal treatment. In fact, it may safely be said that no single man occupies so high a place in the history of the social reform of his century, etc." His eminent qualities, however, did not keep him from many severe differences of opinion with the Chief Warder. He was sitting in his study one day working at a memorandum for the Prison Commissioners -- one of the neglected senes of memoranda whose publication after his retirement

indicated Sir Wilfred's claim to be the pioneer of artificial sunlight in prisons-- when the Chief Warder interrupted him.

"A bad report from the Bookbinding Shop, sir. The instructor says that a practice is growing among the men of eating the paste issued to them for their work. They say it is preferable to their porridge. We shall either have to put on another warder to supervise the bookbinding or introduce something into the paste which will make it unpalatable."

"Has the paste any nutritive value?" asked Sir Wilfred.

"I couldn't say, sir."

"Weigh the men in the Bookbinding Shop, and then report to me any increase in weight. How many times must I ask you to ascertain all the facts before reporting on any case?"

"Very good, sir! And there's a petition from D-4-12. He's finished his four weeks' solitary, and he wants to know if he can keep at it for another four."

"I disapprove of cellular labour. It makes a man introvert. Who is D-4-12?"

"Long sentence, sir, waiting transference to Egdon."

"I'll see D-4-12 myself."

"Very good, sir!"

Paul was led in.

"I understand you wish to continue cellular labour instead of availing yourself of the privilege of working in association. Why is that?"

"I find it so much more interesting, sir," said Paul.

"It's a most irregular suggestion," said the Chief Warder. "Privileges can only be forfeited by a breach of the regulations witnessed and attested by two officers. Standing Orders are most emphatic on the subject."

"I wonder whether you have narcissistic tendencies?" said the Governor. "The Home Office has not as yet come to any decision about my application for a staff psycho-

analyst."

"Put him in the observation cell," said the Chief Warder
"That brings out any insanity. I've known several cases of men you could hardly have told were mad-- just eccentric, you know-- who've been put on observation, and after a few days they've been raving lunatics. Colonel MacAdder was a great believer in the observation cells."

"Did you lead a very lonely life before conviction? Perhaps you were a shepherd or a lighthouse-keeper, or something of the land?"

"No, sir."

"Most curious. Well, I will consider your case and give you my answer later."

Paul was led back to his cell, and next day was again summoned before the Governor.

"I have considered your application," said Sir Wilfred, "with the most minute care. In fact, I have decided to include it in my forthcoming work on the criminal mind. Perhaps you would like to hear what I have written about you?"

"Case R.," he read:

A young man of respectable family and some education. No previous criminal record. Committed to seven years' penal servitude for traffic in prostitution. Upon completing his first four weeks, R petitioned for extension of cellular labour. Treatment as prescribed by Standing Orders either (a) detention in observation cell for the Medical Officer to satisfy himself about the state of the prisoner's mind, or (b) compulsory work in association with other prisoners unless privilege forfeited by misdemeanour. Treatment by Sir Wilfred Lucas- Dockery -- I decided that R was suffering from misanthropic tendencies induced by a sense of his own inferiority in the presence of others R's crime was the result of an attempt to assert individuality at the expense of community. (Cp Cases D, G and I) Accordingly I attempted to break down his social inhibitions by a series of progressive steps. In the first stage he exercised daily for half an hour in the company of one other prisoner. Conversation was allowed during this period upon approved topics, history, philosophy, public events, etc, the prisoners being chosen among those whose crimes would tend as little as possible to aggravate and encourage R's."

"I have not yet thought of the other stages of your treatment," said Sir Wilfred, "but you can see that individual attention is being paid to your reclamation. It may cause you some gratification to realize that, thanks to my report, you may in time become a case of scientific interest throughout the world. Sir Wilfred Lucas-Dockery's treatment of Case R may haply become a precedent for generations yet unborn. That is something to lift you above the soul-destroying monotony of routine, is it not?"

Paul was led away.

"The men in the kitchen have lodged a complaint that they cannot work with C.2," said the Chief Warder. "They say he has an infectious skin disease all over his hands."

"I can't be worried with things like that," said the Governor irritably "I am trying to decide upon Case R.'s-- I mean D-4-12's -- third stage of reclamation."

Case R of the Lucas-Dockery experiments began in the new regime that afternoon.

"Come out," said the warder, unlocking his cell, "and bring your 'at."

The parade ground, empty of its revolving squads, looked particularly desolate.

"Stand there and don't move till I come back," said the warder.

Presently he returned with a little bony figure in prison dress.

"This 'ere's your pal," he said, "this 'ere's the path you've got to walk on. Neither of you is to touch the other or any part of 'is clothing. Nothing is to be passed from one to the other. You are to keep at a distance of one yard and talk of 'istory, philosophy or kindred subjects. When I rings the bell you stops talking, see? Your pace is to be neither quicker nor slower than average walking-pace. Them's the Governor's instructions, and Gawd 'elp yer if yer does anything wrong. Now walk!"

"This is a silly dodge," said the little man. "I've been

in six prisons, and I never seen nothing to touch it. Most irregular. You doesn't know where you are these days. This blinking prison is going to the dogs. Look at the Chaplain. Wears a wig!"

"Are you here for long?" asked Paul politely.

"Not this time. They couldn't get a proper charge against me. 'Six months for loitering with intent. ' They'd been watching me for weeks, but I wasn't going to let them have a chance this time. Now six months is a very decent little sentence, if you take my meaning One picks up with old friends, and you like it all the more when you comes out. I never minds six months. What's more, I'm known here, so I always gets made 'landing cleaner '. I expect you've seen my hand often enough coming round with the grub. The warders know me, see, so they always keeps the job open for me if they hears I'm coming back. If you're nice to 'em the first two or three times you're 'ere, they'll probably do the same for you."

"Is it a very good job?"

"Well, not as jobs go, but it's a nice start. The best job of all is Reception-cleaner. One doesn't get that for years, unless you've special recommendations. You see, you has all the people coming in fresh from outside, and you hears all the news and gets tobacco sometimes and racing tips. Did you see the cleaner when you come in? Know who he is?"

"Yes," said Paul, "as a matter of fact, I do. He's called Philbrick."

"No, no, old man, you've got the wrong chap. I mean a big stout man. Talks a lot about hotels and restaurants."

"Yes, that's the man I mean."

"Why, don't you know who that is? That's the Governor's brother, Sir Solomon Lucas-Dockery. Told me so hisself. 'Ere for arson. Burnt a castle in Wales. You can see he's a toff."

Chapter III

The Death of a Modern Churchman

SOME days later Paul entered on another phase of his

reclamation. When he came into the prison-square for his afternoon exercise he found that his companion's place had been taken by a burly man of formidable aspect. He had red hair and beard, and red-rimmed eyes, and vast red hands which twirled convulsively at his sides. He turned his ox-like eyes on Paul and gave a slight hail of welcome.

"Your new pal," said the warder, "Get on with it."

"How do you do ?" said Paul politely, "Are you here for long?"

"Life," said the other, "But it doesn't matter much. I look daily for the Second Coming."

They marched on in silence.

"Do you think that this is a good plan of the Governor's ?" asked Paul.

"Yes," said his companion. They walked on in silence, once round, twice round, three times round.

"Talk, you two," shouted the warder. "That's your instructions. Talk!"

"It makes a change," said the big man.

"What are you here for ?" asked Paul. "You don't mind my asking, do you ?"

"It's all the Bible," said the big man. "You should read about it there. Figuratively, you know," he added "It wouldn't be plain to you, I don't suppose, not like it is to me."

"It's not an easy book to understand, is it ?"

"It's not understanding that's needed. It's visions. Do you ever have visions ?"

"No, I'm afraid I don't."

"Nor does the Chaplain. He's no Christian. It was a vision brought me here, an angel clothed in flame, with a crown of flame on his head, crying 'Kill and spare not. The Kingdom is at hand! ' Would you like to hear about it ? I'll tell you I'm a carpenter by profession, or at least I was, you understand." He spoke with a curious

blend of cockney and Biblical English. "Not a joiner -- a cabinet-maker. Well, one day I was just sweeping out the shop before shutting up when the angel of the Lord came in. I didn't know who it was at first 'Just in time,' I said. 'What can I do for you ? ' Then I noticed that all about him there was a red flame and a circle of flame over his head, same as I've been telling you. Then he told me how the Lord had numbered His elect and the day of tabulation was at hand. 'Kill and spare not,' he says I'd not been sleeping well for some time before this. I'd been worrying about my soul and whether I was saved. Well, all that night I thought of what the angel had told me. I didn't see his meaning, not at first, same as you wouldn't. Then it all came to me in a flash. Unworthy that I am, I am the Lord's appointed," said the carpenter. "I am the sword of Israel, I am the lion of the Lord's elect."

"And did you kill anybody?" asked Paul.

"Unworthy that I am, I smote the Philistine, in the name of the Lord of hosts, I struck off his head. It was for a sign in Israel. And now I am gone into captivity, and the mirth is turned into weeping, but the Lord shall deliver me in His appointed time. Woe unto the Philistine in that day' woe unto the uncircumcised.' It were better that a stone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the depths of the sea."

The warder rang his bell. "Inside, you two!" he shouted.

"Any complaints?" asked the Governor on his rounds.

"Yes, sir," said Paul.

The Governor looked at him intently. "Are you the man I put under special treatment?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then it's ridiculous to complain. What is it?"

"I have reason to believe that the man I have to take exercise with is a dangerous lunatic."

"Complaints by one prisoner about another can only be considered when substantiated by the evidence of a warder or of two other prisoners," said the Chief Warder.

"Quite right," said the Governor. "I never heard a more ridiculous complaint. All crime is a form of insanity. I myself chose the prisoner with whom you exercise. I chose him for his peculiar suitability. Let me hear no more on this subject, please."

That afternoon Paul spent another disquieting half-hour on the square.

"I've had another vision," said the mystical homicide
"But I don't yet know quite what it portends. No doubt I shall be told."

"Was it a very beautiful vision ?" asked Paul.

"No words can describe the splendour of it. It was all crimson and wet like blood. I saw the whole prison as if it were carved of ruby, hard and glittering, and the warders and the prisoners creeping in and out like little red ladybirds. And then as I watched all the ruby became soft and wet, like a great sponge soaked in wine, and it was dripping and melting into a great lake of scarlet. Then I woke up. I don't know the meaning of it yet, but I feel that the hand of the Lord is hanging over this prison. D'you ever feel like that, as though it were built in the jaws of a beast? I sometimes dream of a great red tunnel like the throat of a beast and men running down it, sometimes one by one and sometimes in great crowds, running down the throat of the beast, and the breath of the beast is like the blast of a furnace. D'you ever feel like that ?"

"I'm afraid not," said Paul. "Have they given you an interesting library book ?"

"Lady Almuta's Secret ," said the lion of the Lord's elect. "Pretty soft stuff, old-fashioned, too. But I keep reading the Bible. There's a lot of killing in that."

"Dear me, you seem to think about killing a great deal."

"I do. It's my mission, you see," said the big man simply.

Sir Wilfred Lucas-Dockery felt very much like Solomon, at ten o'clock every morning of the week except Sunday. It was then that he sat in judgment upon the cases of misconduct among the prisoners that were brought to

his notice. From this chair Colonel MacAdder had delivered sentence in undeviating accordance with the spirit and the letter of the Standing Orders Concerning the Government of His Majesty's Prisons, dispensing automatic justice like a slot machine. In went the offence, out came the punishment. Not so Wilfred Lucas-Dockery. Never, he felt, was his mind more alert or resourceful or his vast accumulation of knowledge more available than at his little court of summary justice.

"No one knows what to expect," complained warders and prisoners alike.

"Justice," said Sir Wilfred, "is the capacity for regarding each case as an entirely new problem." After a few months of his administration, Sir Wilfred was able to point with some pride to a marked diminution in the number of cases brought before him.

One morning, soon after Paul began on his special regime of reclamation, his companion was called up before the Governor.

"God bless my soul," said Sir Wilfred, "that's the man I put on special treatment. What is he here for?"

"I was on night duty last night between the hours of 8pm and 4 a.m.," testified the warder in a sing-song voice, "when my attention was attracted by sounds of agitation coming from the prisoner's cell. Upon going to the observation hole, I observed the prisoner pacing up and down his cell in a state of high excitement. In one hand he held his Bible, and in the other a piece of wood which he had broken from his stool. His eyes were staring; he was breathing heavily, and at times muttering verses of the Bible. I remonstrated with the prisoner when he addressed me in terms prejudicial to good discipline."

"What are the words complained of?" asked the Chief Warder.

"He called me a Moabite, an abomination of Moab, a wash-pot, an unclean thing, an uncircumcised Moabite, an idolater, and a whore of Babylon, sir."

"I see. What do you advise, officer?"

"A clear case of insubordination, sir," said the Chief Warder. "Try him on No 1 diet for a bit."

But when he asked the Chief Warder's opinion, Sir Wilfred was not really seeking advice. He liked to emphasise in his own mind, and perhaps that of the prisoners, the difference between the official view and his own.

"What would you say was the most significant part of the evidence?" he asked.

The Chief Warder considered. "I think whore of Babylon, on the whole, sir."

Sir Wilfred smiled as a conjurer may who has forced the right card.

"Now I," he said, "am of different opinion. It may surprise you, but I should say that the significant thing about this case was the fact that the prisoner held a piece of the stool."

"Destruction of prison property," said the Chief Warder. "Yes, that's pretty bad."

"Now what was your profession before conviction?" asked the Governor, turning to the prisoner.

"Carpenter, sir."

"I knew it!" said the Governor triumphantly. "We have another case of the frustrated creative urge. Now fasten, my man. It is very wrong of you to insult the officer, who is clearly none of the things you mentioned. He symbolizes the just disapproval of society and is, like all the prison staff, a member of the Church of England. But I understand your difficulty. You have been used to creative craftsmanship, have you not, and you find prison life deprives you of the means of self-expression, and your energies find vent in these foolish outbursts! I will see to it that a bench and a set of carpenter's tools are provided for you. The first thing you shall do is to mend the piece of furniture you so wantonly destroyed. After that we will find other work for you in your old trade. You may go. Get to the cause of the trouble," Sir Wilfred added when the prisoner was led away, "your Standing Orders may repress the symptoms, they do not probe to the underlying cause."

Two days later the prison was in a state of intense excitement. Something had happened. Paul woke as the

bell rang at the usual time, but it was nearly half an hour before the doors were unlocked. He heard the warder's "Slops outside," getting nearer and nearer, interjected with an occasional "Don't ask questions," "Mind your own business," or a sinister "You'll know soon enough," in reply to the prisoners' questions. They, too, had sensed something unusual. Perhaps it was an outbreak of some disease -- spotted fever, Paul thought, or a national disaster in the world outside -- a war or revolution. In their enforced silence, the nerves of all the men were tightened to an acuteness of perception. Paul read wholesale massacres in the warder's face.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"I should bleeding well say there was," said the warder, "and the next man as asks me a question is going to cop it hot!"

Paul began scrubbing out his cell. Dissatisfied curiosity contended in his thoughts with irritation at this interruption of routine. Two warders passed his door talking.

"I don't say I'm not sorry for the poor bird. All I says is, it was time the Governor had a lesson."

"It might have been one of us," said the other warder in a hushed voice.

Breakfast arrived. As the hand appeared at his door. Paul whispered, "What's happened ! ?"

"Why, ain't you 'eard? There's been a murder, shocking bloodthirsty."

"Get on there," roared the warder in charge of the landing.

So the Governor had been murdered, thought Paul; he had been a mischievous old bore. Still, it was very disturbing, for the news of a murder which was barely noticed in the gay world of trams and tubes and boxing-matches caused an electric terror in this community of silent men. The interval between breakfast and chapel seemed interminable. At last the bell went. The doors were opened again. They marched in silence to the chapel. As it happened, Philbrick was in the next seat to Paul. The warders sat on raised seats, watchful for any attempt at conversation. The hymn was the recognized

time for the exchange of gossip. Paul waited for it impatiently. Clearly it was not the Governor who had been murdered. He stood on the chancel steps, Prayer-book in hand. Mr Prendergast was nowhere to be seen. The Governor conducted the service. The Medical Officer read the lessons, stumbling heavily over the longer words. Where was Mr Prendergast?

At last the hymn was announced. The organ struck up, played with great feeling by a prisoner who until his conviction had been assistant organist at a Welsh cathedral. All over the chapel the men filled their chests for a burst of conversation.

"O God, our help in ages past," sang Paul,
"Where's Pren-der-gast to-day?"

"What, ain't you 'eard? 'e's been done in."
"And our eternal home,"

"Old Prendy went to see a chap
What said he'd seen a ghost;

Well, he was dippy, and he'd got
A mallet and a saw."

"Who let the madman have the things?"

"The Governor, who d'you think ?
He asked to be a car-pen-ter.
He sawed off Prendy's head.

"A pal of mine what lives next door,
'E 'eard it 'app-en-ing,
The warder must 'ave 'eard it too,
'E didn't in-ter-fere."

"Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away"

"Poor Prendy 'ollered fit to kill
For nearly 'alf an hour.
'Damned lucky it was Pren-der-gast,
Might 'ave been you or me'

The warder says -- and I agree --
It serves the Governor right"

"Amen"

From all points of view it was lucky that the madman had chosen Mr Prendergast for attack. Some people even suggested that the choice had been made in a more responsible quarter. The death of a prisoner or warder would have called for a Home Office inquiry which might seriously have discouraged the Lucas-Dockery reforms, and also reflected some discredit upon the administration of the Chief Warder. Mr Prendergast's death passed almost unnoticed. His assassin was removed to Broadmoor, and the life of the prison went on smoothly. It was observed, however, that the Chief Warder seemed to have more influence with his superior than he had had before. Sir Wilfred concentrated his attention upon the statistics, and the life of the prison was equitably conducted under the Standing Orders. It was quite like it had been in old MacAdder's day, the warders observed. But Paul did not reap the benefits of this happy reversion to tradition, because some few days later he was removed with a band of others to the Convict Settlement at Egdon Heath.

Chapter IV

Nor Iron Bars a Cage

THE granite walls of Egdon Heath Penal Settlement are visible, when there is no mist, from the main road, and it is not uncommon for cars to stop there a few moments while the occupants stand up and stare happily about them. They are looking for convicts, and as often as not they are rewarded by seeing move across the heath before them a black group of men chained together and uniformly dressed, with a mounted and armed warder riding at their side. They give an appearance of industry which on investigation is quite illusionary, for so much of the day. At Egdon is taken up with marching to and from the quarries, in issuing and counting tools, in guarding and chaining and releasing the workmen, that there is very little work done. But there is usually something to be seen from the road, enough, anyway, to be imaging from the very aspect of the building to send the trippers off to their teas with their consciences agreeably unquiet at the memory of small dishonesties in railway trains, inaccurate income tax returns, and the hundred and one minor infractions of law that are inevitable in civilized life.

Paul arrived from Blackstone late one afternoon in early autumn with two warders and six other long-

sentence prisoners. The journey had been spent in an ordinary third-class railway carriage, where the two warders smoked black tobacco in cheap little wooden pipes and were inclined towards conversation.

"You'll find a lot of improvements since you were here last," said one of them, "There's two coloured-glass windows in the chapel, presented by the last Governor's widow. Lovely they are, St Peter and St Paul in prison being released by an angel. Some of the Low Church prisoners don't like them, though."

"We had a lecture last week, too, but it wasn't very popular --"The Work of the League of Nations,' given by a young chap of the name of Potts. Still, it makes a change. I hear you've been having a lot of changes at Blackstone."

"I should just about think we have," said one of the convicts, and proceeded to give a somewhat exaggerated account of the death of Mr Prendergast. Presently one of the warders, observing that Paul seemed shy of joining in the conversation, handed him a daily paper. "Like to look at this, sonny?" he said, "It's the last you'll see for some time."

There was very little in it to interest Paul, whose only information from the outside world during the last six weeks had come from Sir Wilfred Lucas-Dockery's weekly bulletins (for one of the first discoveries of his captivity was that interest in "news" does not spring from genuine curiosity, but from the desire for completeness. During his long years of freedom, he had scarcely allowed a day to pass without reading fairly fully from at least two newspapers, always pressing on with a series of events which never came to an end. Once the series was broken, he had little desire to resume it), but he was deeply moved to discover on one of the middle pages an obscure but recognizable photograph of Margot and Peter, "The Honourable Mrs Beste-Chetwynde," it said below, "and her son Peter, who succeeds his uncle as Earl of Pastmaster." In the next column was an announcement of the death of Lord Pastmaster and a brief survey of his uneventful life. At the end it said, "It is understood that Mrs Beste-Chetwynde and the young Earl, who have been spending the last few months at their villa in Corfu, will return to England in a few days. Mrs Beste-Chetwynde has for many years been a prominent hostess in the fashionable world and is regarded as one of the most beautiful women in Society. Her son's succession to the

earldom recalls the sensation caused in May of this year by the announcement of her engagement to Mr. Paul Pennyfeather and the dramatic arrest of the bridegroom at a leading West End hotel a few hours before the wedding ceremony. The new Lord Pastmaster is sixteen years old, and has up till now been educated privately."

Paul sat back in the carriage for a long time looking at the photograph, while his companions played several hands of poker in reckless disregard of Standing Orders. In his six weeks of solitude and grave consideration he had failed to make up his mind about Margot Beste-Chetwynde, it was torn and distracted by two conflicting methods of thought. On one side was the dead weight of precept, inherited from generations of schoolmasters and divines. According to these, the problem was difficult but not insoluble. He had "done the right thing" in shielding the woman so much was clear, but Margot had not quite filled the place assigned to her, for in this case she was grossly culpable, and he was shielding her, not from misfortune nor injustice, but from the consequence of her crimes, he felt a flush about his knees as Boy Scout honour whispered that Margot had got him into a row and ought jolly well to own up and face the music. As he sat over his post-bags he had wrestled with this argument without achieving any satisfactory result except a growing conviction that there was something radically inapplicable about this whole code of ready-made honour that is the still small voice, trained to command, of the Englishman all the world over. On the other hand was the undeniable cogency of Peter Beste-Chetwynde's "You can't see Mamma in prison, can you ?" The more Paul considered this, the more he perceived it to be the statement of a natural law. He appreciated the assumption of comprehension with which Peter had delivered it. As he studied Margot's photograph, dubiously transmitted as it was, he was strengthened in his belief that there was, in fact, and should be, one law for her and another for himself, and that the raw little exertions of nineteenth-century Radicals were essentially base and trivial and misdirected. It was not simply that Margot had been very rich or that he had been in love with her. It was just that he saw the impossibility of Margot in prison, the bare connection of vocables associating the ideas was obscene Margot dressed in prison uniform, hustled down corridors by wardresses -- all like the younger Miss Fagan -- visited by philanthropic old ladies with devotional pamphlets, set to work in the laundry washing the other prisoners clothes -- these things were impossible, and if the preposterous processes of law had condemned her, then the woman that they actually

caught and pinned down would not have been Margot, but some quite other person of the same name and somewhat similar appearance. It was impossible to imprison the Margot who had committed the crime. If some one had to suffer that the public might be discouraged from providing poor Mrs Grimes with the only employment for which civilization had prepared her, then it had better be Paul than that other woman with Margot's name, for anyone who has been to an English public school will always feel comparatively at home in prison. It is the people brought up in the gay intimacy of the slums, Paul learned, who find prison so soul-destroying.

How lovely Margot was, Paul reflected, even in this absurd photograph, this grey-and-black smudge of ink! Even the most hardened criminal there -- he was serving his thud sentence for blackmail -- laid down his cards for a moment and remarked upon how the whole carriage seemed to be flooded with the delectable savour of the Champs Elysees in early June. "Funny," he said. "I thought I smelt scent." And that set them off talking about women.

Paul found another old friend at Egdon Heath Prison a short, thick-set, cheerful figure who stumped along in front of him on the way to chapel, making a good deal of noise with an artificial leg. "Here we are again, old boy!" he remarked during one of the responses. "I'm in the soup as per usual."

"Didn't you like the job?" Paul asked.

"Top hole," said Grimes, "but the hell of a thing happened. Tell you later."

That morning, complete with pickaxes, field-telephone and two armed and mounted warders, Paul and a little squad of fellow-criminals were led to the quarries. Grimes was in the party.

"I've been here a fortnight," said Grimes, as soon as they got an opportunity of talking, "and it seems too long already. I've always been a sociable chap, and I don't like it. Three years is too long, old boy. Still, we'll have God's own beano when I get out. I've been t hinking about that day and night."

"I suppose it was bigamy?" said Paul.

"The same. I ought to have stayed abroad. I was arrested as soon as I landed. You see, Mrs Grimes turned up at the shop, so off Grimes went. There are various sorts of hell, but that young woman can beat up a pretty lively one of her own."

A warder passed them by, and they moved apart, banging industriously at the sandstone cliff before them. "I'm not sure it wasn't worth it, though," said Grimes, "to see poor old Flossie in the box and my sometime father-in-law. I hear the old man's shut down the school. Grimes gave the place a bad name. See anything of old Prendy ever?"

"He was murdered the other day."

"Poor old Prendy' He wasn't cut out for the happy life, was he? D'you know, I think I shall give up school-mastering for good when I get out. It doesn't lead anywhere."

"It seems to have led us both to the same place."

"Yes. Rather a coincidence, isn't it? Damn, here's that policeman again."

Soon they were marched back to the prison. Except for the work in the quarries, life at Egdon was almost the same as at Blackstone.

"Slops outside," chapel, privacy.

After a week, however, Paul became conscious of an alien influence at work. His first intonation of this came from the Chaplain.

"Your library books," he said one day, popping cheerfully into Paul's cell and handing him two new novels, still in their wrappers, and bearing inside them the label of a Piccadilly bookseller. "If you don't like them I have several for you to choose from." He showed him rather coyly the pile of gaily-bound volumes he carried under his arm. "I thought you'd like the new Virginia Woolf. It's only been out two days."

"Thank you, sir," said Paul politely. Clearly the library of his new prison was run on a much more enterprising and extravagant plan than at Blackstone.

"Or there's this book on Theatrical Design," said the

Chaplain, showing him a large illustrated volume that could hardly have cost less than three guineas. "Perhaps we might stretch a point and give you that as well as your 'educational work.'"

"Thank you, sir," said Paul.

"Let me know if you want a change," said the Chaplain. "And, by the way, you're allowed to write a letter now, you know. If, by any chance, you're writing to Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde, do mention that you think the library good. She's presenting a new pulpit to the chapel in carved alabaster," he added irrelevantly, and popped out again to give Grimes a copy of Smiles's Self-Help, out of which some unreceptive reader in the remote past had torn the last hundred and eight pages.

"People may think as they like about well-thumbed favourites," thought Paul, "but there is something incomparably thrilling in first opening a brand-new book. Why should the Chaplain want me to mention the library to Margot?" he wondered.

That evening at supper, Paul noticed without surprise that there were several small pieces of coal in his dripping; that kind of thing did happen now and then, but he was somewhat disconcerted, when he attempted to scrape them out, to find that they were quite soft. Prison food was often rather odd, it was a mistake to complain, but still. He examined his dripping more closely. It had a pinkish tinge that should not have been there and was unusually firm and sticky under his knife. He tasted it dubiously. It was *pate de foie gras*.

From then onwards there was seldom a day on which some small meteorite of this kind did not mysteriously fall from the outside world. One day he returned from the heath to find his cell heavy with scent in the half-dark, for the lights were rarely lit until some time after sundown, and the window was very small. His table was filled with a large bunch of winter roses, which had cost three shillings each that morning in Bond Street (Prisoners at Egdon are allowed to keep flowers in their cells, and often risk severe reprimand by stooping to pick pimpernels and periwinkles on their way from work).

On another occasion the prison-doctor, trotting on his daily round of inspection, paused at Paul's cell, examined his name on the card hanging inside his door, looked hard at him and said, "You need a tonic." He trotted on

without more ado, but next day a huge medicine-bottle was placed in Paul's cell. "You're to take two glasses with each meal," said the warder, "and I hopes you like it." Paul could not quite decide whether the warder's tone was friendly or not, but he liked the medicine, for it was brown sherry.

On another occasion great indignation was aroused in the cell next door to him, whose occupant-- an aged burglar-- was inadvertently given Paul's ration of caviare. He was speedily appeased by the substitution for it of an unusually large lump of cold bacon, but not before the warder in charge had suffered considerable alarm at the possibility of a complaint to the Governor.

"I'm not one to make a fuss usually," said the old burglar, "but I will be treated fair. Why, you only had to look at the stuff they give me to see that it was bad, let alone taste it. And on bacon night, too! You take my tip," he said to Paul as they found themselves alone in the quarries one day, "and keep your eyes open. You're a new one, and they might easily try and put a thing like that over on you. Don't eat it, that's putting you in the wrong. Keep it and show it to the Governor. They ain't got no right to try on a thing like that, and they knows it."

Presently a letter came from Margot. It was not a long one.

Darling Paul, it said,

It is so difficult writing to you because, you know, I never can write letters, and ifs so particularly hard with you because the policemen read it and cross it all out if they don't like it, and I can't really think of anything they will like. Peter and I are back at King's Thursday. It was divine at Corfu, except for an English Doctor who was a bore and would call so often. Do you know, I don't really like this house terribly, and I am having it redone. Do you mind? Peter has become an earl -- did you know? -- and is rather sweet about it, and very self-conscious, which you wouldn't expect, really, would you, knowing Peter ? I'm going to come and see you some time -- may I? -- when I can get away, but Bobby P. 's death has made such a lot of things to see to. I do hope you're getting enough food and books and things, or will they cross that out ? Love, Margot.
P.S.

I was cut by Lady Circumference, my dear, at Newmarket, a real point-blank Tranby Croft cut. Poor Maltravers says if I am not careful I shall find myself socially ostracised.

Don't you think that will be marvellous? I may be wrong, but, do you know, I rather believe poor little Alastair Trumpington's going to fall in love with me. What shall I do?

Eventually Margot came herself.

It was the first time they had met since the morning in June when she had sent him off to rescue her distressed proteges in Marseilles. The meeting took place in a small room set aside for visitors. Margot sat at one end of the table, Paul at the other, with a warder between them.

"I must ask you both to put your hands on the table in front of you," said the warder.

"Like Up Jenkins," said Margot faintly, laying her exquisitely manicured hands with the gloves beside her bag. Paul for the first time noticed how coarse and ill-kept his hands had become. For a moment neither spoke.

"Do I look awful?" Paul said at last, "I haven't seen a looking-glass for some time."

"Well, perhaps just a little mal soigni, darling. Don't they let you shave at all?"

"No discussion of the prison regime is permitted. Prisoners are allowed to make a plain statement of their state of health but must on no account make complaints or comments upon their general condition."

"Oh dear," said Margot; "this is going to be very difficult. What are we to say to each other? I'm almost sorry I came. You are glad I came, aren't you?"

"Don't mind me, mum, if you want to talk personal," said the warder kindly. "I only have to stop conspiracy. Nothing I hear ever goes any further, and I hear a good deal, I can tell you. They carry on awfully, some of the women, what with crying and fainting and hysterics generally. Why, one of them," he said with relish, "had an epileptic fit not long ago."

"I think it's more likely I shall have a fit," said Margot. "I've never felt so shy in my life. Paul, do say something, please."

"How's Alastair?" said Paul.

"Rather sweet, really. He's always at King's Thursday now. I like him."

Another pause.

"Do you know," said Margot, "it's an odd thing, but I do believe that after all these years I'm beginning to be regarded as no longer a respectable woman. I told you when I wrote, didn't I, that Lady Circumference cut me the other day!? Of course she's just a thoroughly bad-mannered old woman, but there have been a whole lot of things rather like that lately. Don't you think it's rather awful?"

"You won't mind much, will you?" said Paul. "They're awful old bores, anyway."

"Yes, but I don't like them dropping me. Of course, I don't mind, really, but I think it's just a pity, particularly for Peter. It's not just Lady Circumference, but Lady Vanbrugh and Fanny Simpleforth and the Stayles and all those people. It's a pity it should happen just when Peter's beginning to be a little class-conscious, anyway. It'll give him all the wrong ideas, don't you think?"

"How's business?" asked Paul abruptly.

"Paul, you mustn't be nasty to me," said Margot in a low voice. "I don't think you'd say that if you knew quite how I was feeling."

"I'm sorry, Margot. As a matter of fact, I just wanted to know."

"I'm selling out. A Swiss firm was making things difficult. But I don't think that business has anything to do with the -- the ostracism, as Maltravers would say. I believe it's all because I'm beginning to grow old."

"I never heard anything so ridiculous. Why, all those people are about eighty, and anyway, you aren't at all."

"I was afraid you wouldn't understand," said Margot and there was another pause.

"Ten minutes more," said the warder.

"Things haven't turned out quite as we expected them to, have they?" said Margot.

They talked about some parties Margot had been to and the books Paul was reading. At last Margot said, "Paul, I'm going. I simply can't stand another moment of this!"

"It was nice of you to come," said Paul.

"I've decided something rather important," said Margot, "just this minute. I am going to be married quite soon to Maltravers. I'm sorry, but I am."

"I suppose it's because I look so awful?" said Paul.

"No, it's just everything. It's that, too, in a way, but not the way you mean, Paul. It's simply something that's going to happen. Do you understand at all, dear ! ? It may help you, too, in a way, but I don't want you to think that that's the reason, either. It's just how things are going to happen. Oh dear! How difficult it is to say anything."

"If you should want to kiss good-bye," said the gaoler, "not being husband and wife, it's not usual. Still, I don't mind stretching a point for once."

"Oh, God," said Margot, and left the room without looking back.

Paul returned to his cell. His supper had already been served out to him, a small pie from which protruded the feet of two pigeons, there was even a table-napkin wrapped round it. But Paul had very little appetite, for he was greatly pained at how little he was pained by the events of the afternoon.

CHAPTER V

The Passing of a Public School Man

A DAY or two later Paul found himself next to Grimes in the quarry. When the warder was out of earshot Grimes said "Old boy, I can't stand this much longer. It just ain't good enough."

"I don't see any way out," said Paul, "Anyway, it's quite bearable. I'd as soon be here as at Llanabba."

"Not so Grimes," said Grimes, "He just languishes in

captivity, like the lark. It's all right for you-- you like reading and thinking and all that. Well, I'm different, you know I like drink and a bit of fun, and chatting now and then to my pals. I'm a sociable chap. It's turning me into a giddy machine, this life, and there's an awful chaplain, who gives me the pip, who keeps butting in in a breezy kind of way and asking if I feel I'm 'right with God '. Of course I'm not, and I tell him so I can stand most sorts of misfortune, old boy, but I can't stand repression. That was what broke me up at Llanabba, and it's what's going to break me up here, if I don't look out for myself. It seems to me it's time Grimes flitted off to another clime."

"No one has ever succeeded in escaping from this prison," said Paul.

"Well, just you watch next time there's a fog!"

As luck would have it, there was a fog next day, a heavy impenetrable white mist which came up quite suddenly while they were at work, enveloping men and quarry in the way that mists do on Egdon Heath.

"Close up there," said the warder in charge, "Stop work and close up. Look out there, you idiot!" for Grimes had stumbled over the field-telephone. "If you've broken it you'll come up before the Governor to-morrow."

"Hold this horse," said the other warder, handing the reins to Grimes.

He stooped and began to collect the chains on which the men were strung for their march home. Grimes seemed to be having some difficulty with the horse, which was plunging and rearing further away from the squad.

"Can't you even hold a horse!" said the warder. Suddenly Grimes, with remarkable agility considering his leg, was seen to be in the saddle riding away into the heath.

"Come back," roared the warder, "come back, or I'll fire!" He put his rifle to his shoulder and fired into the fog. "He'll come back all right," he said, "No one ever gets away for long. He'll get solitary confinement and No 1 diet for this, poor fish."

No one seemed to be much disturbed by the incident, even when it was found that the field-telephone was disconnected.

"He hasn't a hope," said the warder, "They often do that, just put down their tools sudden and cut and run. But they can't get away in those clothes and with no money. We shall warn all the farms to-night. Sometimes they stays out hiding for several days, but back they comes when they're hungry, or else they get arrested the moment they shows up in a village. I reckon it's just nerves makes them try it."

That evening the horse came back, but there was no sign of Grimes. Special patrols were sent out with bloodhounds straining at their leashes, the farms and villages on the heath were warned, and the anxious inhabitants barred their doors closely and more pertinently forbade their children to leave the house on any pretext whatever, the roads were watched for miles, and all care were stopped and searched, to the intense annoyance of many law-abiding citizens. But Grimes did not turn up. Bets were silly made among the prisoners as to the day of his recovery, but days passed, and the rations of bread changed hands, but still there was no Grimes.

A week later at morning-service the Chaplain prayed for his soul, the Governor crossed his name off the Body Receipt Book and notified the Home Secretary, the Right Honourable Sir. Humphrey Maltravers, that Grimes was dead.

"I'm afraid it was a terrible end," said the Chaplain to Paul.

"Did they find the body?"

"No, that is the worst thing about it. The hounds followed his scent as far as Egdon Mire, there it ended. A shepherd who knows the paths through the bog found his hat floating on the surface at the most treacherous part. I'm afraid there is no doubt that he died a very horrible death."

"Poor old Grimes," said Paul, "And he was an old Harrovian, too."

But later, thinking things over as he ate peacefully, one by one, the oysters that had been provided as a "relish" for his supper, Paul knew that Grimes was not dead. Lord Tangent was dead; Mr. Prendergast was dead, the time would even come for Paul Pennyfeather, but Grimes, Paul at last realized, was of the immortals. He was a life

force. Sentenced to death in Flanders, he popped up in Wales, drowned in Wales, he emerged in South America, engulfed in the dark mystery of Egdon Mire, he would rise again somewhere at some time, shaking from his limbs the musty integuments of the tomb. Surely he had followed in the Bacchic tram of distant Arcady, and played on the reeds of myth by forgotten streams, and taught the childish satyrs the art of love? Had he not suffered unscathed the fearful dooms of all the offended gods of all the histones, fire, brimstone, and yawning earthquakes, plague and pestilence? Had he not stood, like the Pompeian sentry, while the Citadels of the Plain fell to rum about his ears? Had he not, like some grease-caked Channel-swimmer, breasted the waves of the Deluge? Had he not moved unseen when darkness covered the waters?

"I often wonder whether I am blameless in the matter," said the Chaplain. "It is awful to think of someone under my care having come to so terrible an end. I tried to console him and reconcile him with his life, but things are so difficult, there are so many men to see. Poor fellow! To think of him alone out there in the bog, with no one to help him!"

CHAPTER VI

The Passing of Paul Pennyfeather

A FEW days later Paul was summoned to the Governor's room.

"I have an order here from the Home Secretary granting leave for you to go into a private nursing-home for the removal of your appendix. You will start under escort, in plain clothes, this morning."

"But, sir," said Paul, "I don't want to have my appendix removed. In fact, it was done years ago when I was still at school."

"Nonsense," said the Governor. "I've got an order here from the Home Secretary especially requiring that it shall be done. Officer, take this man away and give him his clothes for the journey."

Paul was led away. The clothes in which he had been tried had been sent with him from Blackstone. The warder took them out of a locker, unfolded them and handed them to Paul. "Shoes, socks, trousers, waistcoat,

coat, shirt, collar, tie and hat," he said. "Will you sign for them? The jewellery stays here." He collected the watch, links, tie-pin, note-case and the other odds and ends that had been in Paul's pockets and put them back in the locker. "We can't do anything about your hair," said the warder, "but you're allowed a shave."

Half an hour later Paul emerged from his cell, looking for all the world like a normal civilized man, such as you might see daily in any tube-railway.

"Feels funny, don't it?" said the warder who let him out, "Here's your escort."

Another normal civilized man, such as you might see daily in any tube-railway, confronted Paul.

"Time we started, if you're quite ready," he said.

Robbed of their uniforms, it seemed natural that they should treat each other with normal consideration. Indeed, Paul thought he detected a certain deference in the man's tone

"It's very odd," said Paul in the van that took them to the station, "it's no good arguing with the Governor, but he's made some ridiculous mistake I've had my appendix out already."

"Not half," said the warder with a wink, "but don't go talking about it so loud. The driver's not in on this."

A first-class carriage had been reserved for them in the train. As they drew out of Egdon Station the warder said, "Well, that's the last you'll see of the old place for some time. Solemn thought, death, ain't it?" And he gave another shattering wink.

They had luncheon in their carriage, Paul feeling a little too shy of his closely-cropped head to venture hatless into the restaurant car. After luncheon, they smoked cigars. The warder paid from a fat note-case. "Oh, I nearly forgot," he said, "Here's your will for you to sign, in case anything should happen." He produced a long blue paper and handed it to Paul. 'The Last Will and Testament of Paul Pennyfeather' was handsomely embossed at the top. Below, it was stated, with the usual legal paraphrases, that he left all he possessed to Margot Beste-Chetwynde. Two witnesses had already signed below the vacant space.

"I'm sure this is all very irregular," said Paul signing, "I wish you'd tell me what all this means."

"I don't know nothing," said the warder. "The young gentleman give me the will."

"What young gentleman ?"

"How should I know ?" said the warder, "The young gentleman what's arranged everything. Very sensible to make a will. You never know with an operation what may happen, do you ? I had an aunt died having gall-stones taken out, and she hadn't made a will. Very awkward it was, her not being married properly, you see. Fine, healthy woman, too, to look at her. Don't you get worried, Mr. Pennyfeather, everything will be done strictly according to regulations."

"Where are we going ? At least you must know that." For answer the warder took a printed card from his pocket.

'Cliff Place, Worthing,' he read, 'High-class Nursing and Private Sanatorium. Electric thermal treatment under medical supervision. Augustus Fagan, M.D , Proprietor'

"Approved by the Home Secretary," said the warder. "Nothing to complain of."

Late in the afternoon they arrived. A car was waiting to take them to Cliff Place.

'This ends my responsibility," said the warder. "From now on the doctor's in charge."

Like all Dr. Fagan's enterprises, Cliff Place was conceived on a large scale. The house stood alone on the seashore some miles from the town, and was approached by a long drive. In detail, however, it showed some signs of neglect. The verandah was deep in driven leaves, two of the windows were broken. Paul's escort rang the bell at the front door, and Dingy, dressed as a nurse, opened it to them.

'The servants have all gone," she said. "I suppose this is the appendicitis case. Come in." She showed no signs of recognising Paul as she led him upstairs. "This is your room. The Home Office regulations insisted that it should be on an upper storey with barred windows. We have had to put the bars in specially. They will be

charged for in the bill. The surgeon will be here in a few minutes."

As she went out she locked the door Paul sat down on the bed and waited. Below his window the sea beat on the shingle. A small steam-yacht lay at anchor some distance out to sea. The grey horizon faded indistinctly into the grey sky.

Presently steps approached, and his door opened. In came Dr. Fagan, Sir Alastair Digby-Vaine-Trumpington, and an elderly little man with a drooping red moustache, evidently much the worse for drink.

"Sorry we're late," said Sir Alastair, "but I've had an awful day with this man trying to keep him sober. He gave me the slip just as we were starting. I was afraid at first that he was too tight to be moved, but I think he can just carry on. Have you got the papers made out?"

No one paid much attention to Paul.

"Here they are," said Dr. Fagan. "This is the statement you are to forward to the Home Secretary, and a duplicate for the Governor of the prison. Shall I read them to you?"

" 'Sh'all right," said the surgeon.

"They merely state that you operated on the patient for appendicitis, but that he died under the anaesthetic without regaining consciousness."

"Poor ole chap," said the surgeon, "Poor, poor ol' girl," And two tears of sympathy welled up in his eyes. "I daresay the world had been very hard on her. It's a hard world for women."

"That's all right," said Sir Alastair. "Don't worry. You did all that was humanly possible."

"That's the truth," said the surgeon, "and I don't care who knows it."

"This is the ordinary certificate of death," said Dr Fagan, "Will you be so good as to sign it there?"

"Oh, death, where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling?" said the surgeon, and with these words and a laboured effort of the pen he terminated the legal life of Paul Pennyfeather.

"Splendid," said Sir Alastair. "Now here's your money. If I were you I should run off and have a drink while the pubs are still open."

"D'you know, I think I will," said the surgeon, and left the sanatorium.

There was a hush for nearly a minute after he had left the room. The presence of death, even in its coldest and most legal form, seemed to cause an air of solemnity. It was broken at length by the arrival of Flossie, splendidly attired in magenta and green.

"Why, here you all are!" she said with genuine delight. "And Mr Pennyfeather too, to be sure! Quite a little party."

She had said the right thing. The word "party" seemed to strike a responsive note in Dr. Fagan.

"Let us go down to supper," he said, "I'm sure we all have a great deal to be thankful for."

After supper, Dr. Fagan made a little speech. "I think this an important evening for most of us," he said, "most of all for my dear friend and sometime colleague, Paul Pennyfeather, in whose death to-night we are all to some extent participants. For myself as well as for him it is the beginning of a new phase of life. Frankly, this nursing-home has not been a success. A time must come to every man when he begins to doubt his vocation. You may think me almost an old man, but I do not feel too old to start lightheartedly on a new manner of life. This evening's events have made this possible for me. I think," he said, glancing at his daughters, "that it is time I was alone. But this is not the hour to review the plans of my future. When you get to my age, if you have been at all observant of the people you have met and the accidents which have happened to you, you cannot help being struck with an amazing cohesiveness of events. How promiscuously we who are here this evening have been thrown together! How enduring and endearing the memories that from now onwards will unite us! I think we should drink a toast -- to Fortune, a much-maligned lady."

Once before Paul had drunk the same toast. This time there was no calamity. They drank silently, and Alastair rose from the table.

"It's time Paul and I were going," he said.

They walked down to the beach together. A boat was waiting for them.

"That's Margot's yacht," said Alastair, "It's to take you to her house at Corfu until you've decided about things. Good-bye. Good luck!"

"Aren't you coming any further ?" asked Paul.

"No, I've got to drive back to King's Thursday. Margot will be anxious to know how things have gone off."

Paul got into the boat and was rowed away. Sir Alastair, like Sir Bedivere, watched him out of sight.

Chapter VII

Resurrection

THREE weeks later Paul sat on the verandah of Margot's villa, with his evening open before him, watching the sunset on the Albanian hills across the water change, with the crude brilliance of a German picture-postcard, from green to violet. He looked at his watch, which had that morning arrived from England. It was half-past six.

Below him in the harbour a ship had come in from Greece and was unloading her cargo. The little boats hung round her like flies, plying their trade of olive-wood souvenirs and forged francs. There were two hours before dinner. Paul rose and descended the arcaded street into the square, drawing his scarf tight about his throat, the evenings began to get cold about this time. It was odd being dead. That morning Margot had sent him a bunch of Press cuttings about himself, most of them headed "Wedding Sensation Echo" or "Death of Society Bridegroom Convict". With them were his tie-pin and the rest of his possessions which had been sent to her from Egdon. He felt the need of the bustle of the cafes and the quayside to convince him fully of his existence. He stopped at a stall and bought some Turkish delight. It was odd being dead.

Suddenly he was aware of a familiar figure approaching

him across the square.

"Hullo," said Paul.

"Hullo!" said Otto Silenus. He was carrying on his shoulder a shapeless knapsack of canvas.

"Why don't you give that to one of the boys? They'll take it for a few drachmas."

"I have no money. Will you pay him ?"

"Yes."

"All right ! Then that will be best. I suppose you are staying with Margot ?"

"I'm staying at her house. She's in England."

"That's a pity. I hoped I should find her here. Still I will stay for a little, I think. Will there be room for me ?"

"I suppose so. I'm all alone here."

"I have changed my mind. I think, after all, I will marry Margot."

"I'm afraid it's too late."

"Too late ?"

"Yes, she's married someone else."

"I never thought of that. Oh well, it doesn't matter really. Whom did she marry? That sensible Mal-travers ?"

"Yes, he's changed his name now. He's called Viscount Metroland."

"What a funny name!"

They walked up the hill together. "I've just been to Greece to see the buildings there," said Professor Silenus.

"Did you like them ?"

"They are unspeakably ugly. But there were some nice goats. I thought they sent you to prison."

"Yes, they did, but I got out."

"Yes, you must have, I suppose. Wasn't it nice?"

"Not terribly."

"Funny! I thought it would suit you so well. You never can tell with people, can you, what's going to suit them ?"

Margot's servants did not seem surprised at the arrival of another guest.

"I think I shall stay here a long time," said Professor Silenus after dinner. "I have no money left. Are you going soon?"

"Yes, I'm going back to Oxford again to learn theology."

"That will be a good thing. You used not to have a moustache, used you ?" he asked after a time.

"No," said Paul, "I'm just growing one now. I don't want people to recognize me when I go back to England."

"I think it's uglier," said Professor Silenus. "Well, I must go to bed."

"Have you slept any better lately ?"

"Twice since I saw you. It's about my average. Good night."

Ten minutes later he came back on to the terrace, wearing silk pyjamas and a tattered old canvas dressing-gown.

"Can you lend me a nail file?" he asked.

"There's one on my dressing-table."

"Thank you" But he did not go. Instead he walked to the parapet and leant out, looking across the sea.

"It's a good thing for you to be a clergyman," he said at last. "People get ideas about a thing they call life. It sets them all wrong. I think it's poets that are responsible chiefly. Shall I tell you about life ?"

"Yes, do," said Paul politely.

"Well, it's like the big wheel at Luna Park. Have you seen the big wheel?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

"You pay five francs and go into a room with tiers of seats all round, and in the centre the floor is made of a great disc of polished wood that revolves quickly. At first you sit down and watch the others. They are all trying to sit in the wheel, and they keep getting flung off, and that makes them laugh, and you laugh too. It's great fun."

"I don't think that sounds very much like life," said Paul rather sadly.

"Oh, but it is, though. You see, the nearer you can get to the hub of the wheel the slower it is moving and the easier it is to stay on. There's generally someone in the centre who stands up and sometimes does a sort of dance. Often he's paid by the management, though, or, at any rate, he's allowed in free. Of course at the very centre there's a point completely at rest, if one could only find it. I'm not sure. I am not very near that point myself. Of course the professional men get in the way. Lots of people just enjoy scrambling on and being whisked off and scrambling on again. How they all shriek and giggle! Then there are others, like Margot, who sit as far out as they can and hold on for dear life and enjoy that. But the whole point about the wheel is that you needn't get on it at all, if you don't want to. People get hold of ideas about life, and that makes them think they've got to join in the game, even if they don't enjoy it. It doesn't suit everyone. People don't see that when they say 'life' they mean two different things. They can mean simply existence, with its physiological implications of growth and organic change. They can't escape that -- even by death, but because that's inevitable they think the other idea of life is too -- the scrambling and excitement and bumps and the effort to get to the middle, and when we do get to the middle, it's just as if we never started. It's so odd. Now you're a person who was clearly meant to stay in the seats and sit still and if you get bored watch the others. Somehow you got on to the wheel, and you got thrown off again at once with a hard bump. It's all right for Margot, who can cling on, and for me, at the centre, but you're static. Instead of this absurd division into sexes they ought to class people as static and dynamic."

There's a real distinction there, though I can't tell you how it comes. I think we're probably two quite different species spiritually. I used that idea of the wheel in a cinema film once I think it rather sounds like it, don't you? What was it I came back for?"

"A nail file."

"Oh yes, of course. I know of no more utterly boring and futile occupation than generalizing about life. Did you take in what I was saying?"

"Yes, I think so."

"I think I shall have my meals alone in future. Will you tell the servants? It makes me feel quite ill to talk so much. Good night."

"Good night," said Paul.

Some months later Paul returned to Scone College after the absence of little more than a year. His death, though depriving him of his certificates, left him his knowledge. He sat successfully for smalls and Matriculation and entered his old college once more, wearing a commoner's gown and a heavy cavalry moustache. This and his natural diffidence formed a complete disguise. Nobody recognized him. After much doubt and deliberation he retained the name of Pennyfeather, explaining to the Chaplain that he had, he believed, had a distant cousin at Scone a short time ago.

"He came to a very sad end," said the Chaplain, "a wild young man."

"He was a very distant cousin," said Paul hastily.

"Yes, yes, I am sure he was. There is no resemblance between you. He was a thoroughly degenerate type, I am afraid."

Paul's scout also remembered the name.

"There used to be another Mr Pennyfeather on this staircase once," he said, "a very queer gentleman indeed. Would you believe it, sir, he used to take off all his clothes and go out and dance in the quad at night. Nice quiet gentleman, too, he was, except for his dancing. He must have been a little queer in his head, I suppose. I don't know what became of him. They say he died in prison."

Then he proceeded to tell Paul about an Annamese student who had attempted to buy one of the Senior Tutor's daughters.

On the second Sunday of term the Chaplain asked Paul to breakfast, "It's a sad thing," he said, "the way that the 'Varsity breakfast -- 'brekker' we used to call it in my day-- is dying out. People haven't time for it. Always off to lectures at nine o'clock, except on Sundays. Have another kidney, won't you?"

There was another don present, called Mr Sniggs, who addressed the Chaplain rather superciliously, Paul thought, as "Padre."

There was also an undergraduate from another college, a theological student called Stubbs, a grave young man with a quiet voice and with carefully formed opinions. He had a little argument with Mr Sniggs about the plans for rebuilding the Bodleian. Paul supported him.

Next day Paul found Stubbs' card on his table, the corner turned up. Paul went to Hertford to call on Stubbs, but found him out. He left his card, the corner turned up. Two days later a little note came from Hertford.

Dear Pennyfeather,

I wonder if you would care to come to tea next Tuesday, to meet the College Secretary of the League of Nations Union and the Chaplain of the Oxford prison. It would be so nice if you could.

Paul went and ate honey buns and anchovy toast. He liked the ugly, subdued little College, and he liked Stubbs. As term went on Paul and Stubbs took to going for walks together, over Mesopotamia to Old Marston and Beckley. One afternoon, quite lighthearted at the fresh weather, and their long walk, and their tea, Stubbs signed Randal Cantuar in the visitors' book.

Paul rejoined the League of Nations Union and the O S C U. On one occasion, he and Stubbs and some other friends went to the prison to visit the criminals there and sing part-songs to them.

"It opens the mind," said Stubbs, "to see all sides of life. How those unfortunate men appreciated our singing !"

One day in Blackwell's bookshop, Paul found a stout volume, which, the assistant told him, was rapidly becoming a best-seller. It was called *Mother Wales*, by Augustus Fagan. Paul bought it and took it back with him. Stubbs had already read it.

"Most illuminating," he said, "The hospital statistics are terrible. Do you think it would be a good idea to organize a joint debate with Jesus on the subject?" The book was dedicated "To my wife, a wedding present." It was eloquently written. When he had read it Paul put it on his shelves next to Dean Stanley's *Eastern Church*. One other incident recalled momentarily Paul's past life.

One day at the beginning of his second year, as Paul and Stubbs were bicycling down the High as from one lecture to another, they nearly ran into an open Rolls-Royce that swung out of Oriel Street at a dangerous speed. In the back, a heavy fur rug over his knees, sat Philbrick. He turned round as he passed and waved a gloved hand to Paul over the hood.

"Hullo !" he said, "hullo ! How are you? Come and look me up one day. I'm living on the river -- Skindle's."

Then the car disappeared down the High Street, and Paul went on to his lecture.

"Who was your opulent friend?" asked Stubbs, rather impressed.

"Arnold Bennett," said Paul.

"I thought I knew his face," said Stubbs.

Then the lecturer came in, arranged his papers and began a lucid exposition of the heresies of the second century. There was a bishop in Bithyma, Paul learned, who had denied the Divinity of Christ, the immortality of the soul, the existence of good, the legality of marriage, and the validity of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. How right they had been to condemn him!

EPILOGUE

IT was Paul's third year of uneventful residence at Scone. Stubbs finished his cocoa, knocked out his

pipe and rose to go. "I must be off to my digs," he said. "You're lucky staying in college. It's a long ride back to Walton Street on a night like this."

"D'you want to take Von Hugel?" asked Paul.

"No, not to-night. May I leave it till to-morrow?"

Stubbs picked up his scholar's gown and wrapped it round his shoulders. "That was an interesting paper to-night about the Pohsh plebiscites."

"Yes, wasn't it?" said Paul.

Outside there was a confused roaring and breaking of glass.

"The Bollinger seem to be enjoying themselves," said Paul. "Whose rooms are they in this time?"

"Pastmaster's, I think. That young man seems to be going a bit fast for his age."

"Well, I hope he enjoys it," said Paul, "Good night."

"Good night, Paul," said Stubbs.

Paul put the chocolate biscuits back in the cupboard, refilled his pipe, and settled down in his chair. Presently he heard footsteps and a knock at his door.

"Come in," he said, looking round.

Peter Pastmaster came into the room. He was dressed in the bottle-green and white evening coat of the Bollinger Club. His face was flushed and his dark hair slightly disordered.

"May I come in?"

"Yes, do."

"Have you got a drink?"

"You seem to have had a good many already."

"I've had the Boiler in my rooms. Noisy lot. Oh, hell ! I must have a drink."

"There's some whisky in the cupboard. You're drink-

ing rather a lot these days, aren't you, Peter ?"

Peter said nothing, but helped himself to some whisky and soda.

"Feeling a bit ill," he said. Then, after a pause, "Paul, why have you been cutting me all this time ?"

"I don't know. I didn't think there was much to be gained by our knowing each other."

"Not angry about anything ?"

"No, why should I be ?"

"Oh, I don't know." Peter turned his glass in his hand, staring at it intently. "I've been rather angry with you, you know."

"Why ?"

"Oh, I don't know -- about Margot and the man Maltravers and everything."

"I don't think I was much to blame."

"No, I suppose not, only you were part of it all."

"How's Margot ?"

"She's all right -- Margot Metroland. D'you mind if I take another drink?"

"I suppose not."

"Viscountess Metroland," said Peter. "What a name! What a man ! Still, she's got Alastair all the time. Metroland doesn't mind. He's got what he wanted. I don't see much of them really. What do you do all the time, Paul ?"

"I'm going to be ordained soon."

"Wish I didn't feel so damned ill. What were we saying? Oh yes, about Metroland. You know, Paul, I think it was a mistake you ever got mixed up with us, don't you ? We're different somehow. Don't quite know how. Don't think that's rude, do you, Paul?"

"No, I know exactly what you mean. You're dynamic,

and I'm static."

"Is that it ? Expect you're right. Funny thing you used to teach me once, d'you remember ? Llanabba -- Latin sentences, Quominus and Quin, and the organ, d'you remember ?"

"Yes, I remember," said Paul.

"Funny how things happen. You used to teach me the organ, d'you remember ?"

"Yes, I remember," said Paul.

"And then Margot Metroland wanted to marry you, d'you remember ?"

"Yes," said Paul.

"And then you went to prison, and Alastair -- that's Margot Metroland's young man -- and Metroland -- that's her husband -- got you out, d'you remember ?"

"Yes," said Paul, "I remember."

"And here we are talking to one another like this, up here, after all that! Funny, isn't it ?"

"Yes, it is rather."

"Paul, do you remember a thing you said once at the Ritz -- Alastair was there -- that's Margot Metroland's young man, you know -- d'you remember? I was rather tight then too. You said, 'Fortune, a much-maligned lady.' D'you remember that ?"

"Yes," said Paul, "I remember."

"Good old Paul! I knew you would. Let's drink to that now, shall we ? How did it go? Damn, I've forgotten it. Never mind. I wish I didn't feel so ill."

"You drink too much, Peter."

"Oh, damn, what else is there to do ? You going to be a clergyman, Paul ?"

"Yes."

"Damned funny that. You know you ought never to

have got mixed up with me and Metroland. May I have another drink?"

"Time you went to bed, Peter, don't you think?"

"Yes, I suppose it is. Didn't mind my coming in, did you? After all, you used to teach me the organ, d'you remember? Thanks for the whisky!"

So Peter went out, and Paul settled down again in his chair. So the ascetic Ebionites used to turn towards Jerusalem when they prayed. Paul made a note of it. Quite right to suppress them. Then he turned out the light and went into his bedroom to sleep.

THE END

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